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RETAIL PRICES - MARCH QUARTER, 1959

Index numbers of retail prices for the March quarter of 1959 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases,
March Quarter, 1959

City	Aggregate All Groups			All Groups, excluding Price Move- ments in Potatoes and Onions		
	Index Number	Increase from -		Index Number	Increase from -	
		March Qtr., 1958	Dec. Qtr., 1958		March Qtr., 1958	Dec. Qtr., 1958
		%	%		%	%
Brisbane ..	2550	5.8	1.0	2562	5.3	0.6
Toowoomba ..	2497	2.8	0.4	2504	2.2	-0.2
Rockhampton ..	2558	5.7	1.9	2564	5.1	1.2
Townsville ..	2700	7.2	2.7	2714	6.7	2.0
Bundaberg ..	2532	5.4	1.4	2537	4.8	0.7
Weighted Average						
Five Towns ..	2557	5.7	1.2	2568	5.2	0.7

The "C" Series index number for Brisbane in the March quarter, 1959, was 1.0 per cent. higher than in December quarter, 1958. The increase of 5.8 per cent. recorded during the twelve months was again well above the average of the last five years. Excluding the price movements of potatoes and onions, which are subject to violent seasonal fluctuations, increases of 0.6 per cent. since December quarter, and 5.3 per cent. during the previous twelve months, were not as pronounced as for the index as a whole. Removal of the effect of these seasonal items shows the price rise to have been fairly steady over the past three years, the rise during the four quarters ended March, 1959, of 5.3 per cent. being only a little higher than the corresponding rises of 4.3 and 4.4 per cent. in 1956-57 and 1957-58 respectively.

Increased food prices accounted for practically the whole of the rise in the index for Brisbane in the recent quarter. Meat and potato prices were chiefly responsible.

Changes in sections of the index are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases, March Quarter, 1959

City	Food and Groceries			Clothing and Footwear		Miscellaneous Items	
	From Year Ended June, 1939	From Dec. Quarter, 1958		From Year Ended June, 1939	From Dec. Quarter, 1958	From Year Ended June, 1939	From Dec. Quarter, 1958
	A	A	B				
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	244.0	2.5	1.4	301.8	-0.3	149.6	0.3
Toowoomba ..	256.0	1.4	0.0	303.7	-0.8	148.4	0.3
Rockhampton	229.8	4.6	3.1	296.0	-0.1	165.0	0.3
Townsville	234.6	5.4	3.9	297.3	-0.1	162.4	-0.8
Bundaberg ..	231.7	2.7	1.2	301.5	-0.6	151.1	0.1

Note.- A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.

Food and Groceries

The food and grocery section (including potatoes and onions) increased substantially in all cities. For the second quarter in succession, this was largely due to increased beef prices which rose considerably in Townsville, Rockhampton, Brisbane, and Bundaberg, and to a much lesser extent in Toowoomba. Mutton prices also rose in Townsville, decreased in Toowoomba, and remained practically unchanged elsewhere. Pork prices did not record any significant variation during the quarter. Potato, onion, and egg prices increased substantially in all cities, bacon and household soap increased very slightly, while there was a slight downward trend in canned fruit prices.

Clothing and Footwear

For the first time for three years, the clothing group recorded a small downward movement, ranging from 0.8 per cent. in Toowoomba to 0.1 per cent. in Rockhampton and Townsville.

Miscellaneous

This group showed a slight upward movement during the quarter in most of the cities. Increased fuel prices in Brisbane, Toowoomba, and Rockhampton, and higher gas prices in the northern suburbs of Brisbane, were the principal variations.

Rent (4 and 5 roomed houses)

The rent index increased in Townsville, 5.2 per cent.; Bundaberg, 4.1 per cent.; Brisbane, 0.4 per cent.; Rockhampton, 0.2 per cent.; and remained unchanged in Toowoomba.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates

The Commonwealth industrial authority suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953. Since that date, adjustments to the basic wages have been made from time to time, often on special applications, both by the Commonwealth and State industrial authorities. Particulars of such adjustments have been given in previous issues of this bulletin. At present, the New South Wales basic wage alone is varied automatically with movements of the index numbers. In Queensland and Western Australia, the State Industrial Courts have usually varied the wage after the index numbers have been published. Following publication of the index numbers for the March quarter, 1959, the Queensland State Industrial Court raised its basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. 6d. for females, while in Western Australia, the metropolitan basic wage was increased by 1s. 8d. for males and 1s. 1d. for females. In Sydney, an "automatic" increase of 1s. was applied to the male basic wage. In Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania there was no change.

Current basic wage rates are given in the following table.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates
Australian Capital Cities

Capital City	Retail Price Index				Commonwealth Basic Wage		State Basic Wage					
	Dec. Qtr., 1958		March Qtr., 1959		Males ^a		Males		Females		Date of Operation ^b	
	A	B	A	B								
Brisbane	2525	2547	2550	2562	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	27.4.59	
Sydney ..	2673	2682	2681	2682	13	8 0	13	16 0	10	7 0	May, 1959	
Melbourne	2635	2634	2662	2648	13	0 0	13	3 0	9	17 0	Aug., 1956	
Adelaide	2591	2593	2609	2605	12	16 0	12	16 0	9	12 0	26.5.58	
Perth ..	2755	2758	2770	2771	13	1 0	13	15 1	8	18 10	27.4.59	
Hobart ..	2767	2788	2795	2793	13	7 0	13	12 0	10	4 0	Aug., 1956	

Note: A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.

^a Operative first pay-period beginning on or after 21st May, 1958. The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

^b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

The Queensland Industrial Court, on 28th January, 1959, following applications by unions, increased the "parities" or allowances which are payable in addition to the Basic Wage in districts other than the South-Eastern. These increases, which operated from 2nd February, 1959, are as follows:- South-Western District Allowance, from 7s. 4d. to 10s. 6d. per week; Mackay, 5s. 6d. to 9s.; North-Eastern, 10s. to 10s. 6d.; and North-Western, 17s. 4d. to 32s. 6d.

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13th May, 1959

The "C" Series Retail Price Index

(Base for Each Section: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000)

City	Year Ended June, 1939	Year Ended Dec., 1958	Year Ended March, 1959	Quarter Ended -				
				March, 1958	June, 1958	Sept., 1958	Dec., 1958	March, 1959
1. Aggregate - All Groups								
Brisbane ..	863	2471	2505	2411	2462	2484	2525	2550
Toowoomba ..	851	2449	2466	2430	2439	2440	2488	2497
Rockhampton ..	861	2456	2490	2420	2436	2456	2510	2558
Townsville ..	912	2564	2609	2519	2547	2561	2629	2700
Bundaberg ..	841	2451	2484	2402	2440	2465	2498	2532
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	2474	2508	2420	2464	2483	2527	2557
2. All Groups EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a)								
Brisbane ..	863	2495	2527	2432	2492	2508	2547	2562
Toowoomba ..	851	2473	2487	2450	2468	2466	2508	2504
Rockhampton ..	861	2480	2511	2440	2465	2481	2533	2564
Townsville ..	912	2594	2637	2543	2578	2594	2660	2714
Bundaberg ..	841	2476	2505	2420	2469	2494	2519	2537
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	2498	2530	2441	2493	2508	2550	2563
3. Food and Groceries								
Brisbane ..	856	2816	2855	2788	2782	2820	2874	2945
Toowoomba ..	814	2809	2830	2813	2784	2780	2858	2898
Rockhampton ..	895	2768	2818	2751	2740	2758	2822	2952
Townsville ..	955	2932	3011	2881	2896	2922	3030	3195
Bundaberg ..	903	2876	2915	2841	2864	2884	2916	2995
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	2822	2863	2795	2789	2821	2881	2961
4. Food and Groceries EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a)								
Brisbane ..	856	2886	2919	2851	2867	2888	2939	2981
Toowoomba ..	814	2876	2888	2871	2866	2852	2916	2916
Rockhampton ..	895	2834	2875	2806	2821	2825	2882	2972
Townsville ..	955	3016	3090	2946	2982	3015	3121	3242
Bundaberg ..	903	2946	2974	2895	2947	2965	2975	3010
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	2892	2926	2856	2874	2891	2946	2994
5. Clothing and Footwear								
Brisbane ..	829	3318	3328	3293	3317	3322	3340	3331
Toowoomba ..	829	3351	3357	3325	3352	3354	3373	3347
Rockhampton ..	845	3331	3340	3308	3330	3334	3351	3346
Townsville ..	840	3319	3330	3296	3317	3324	3340	3337
Bundaberg ..	839	3367	3374	3339	3367	3371	3390	3369
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	831	3323	3332	3298	3322	3327	3344	3334

(a) Excluded as from September quarter, 1955.